

Message Text

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73

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 L-03 H-02 OMB-01 AID-05 IGA-01 EB-07 MC-02

DODE-00 /064 W

----- 091184

R 231122Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1689

INFO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

CINCPAC HONO HI

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 20033

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MARR, LA, US, RP

SUBJECT: LAO MAP/MASF ASSETS AT UDORN: DISPOSITION OF AIRCRAFT

REF: STATE 225029

1. DISPOSITION OF LAO AIRCRAFT AT UDORN MUST BE EXAMINED FROM
STANDPOINT OF EFFECT ON A) US-LAO RELATIONS; B) THAI-LAO
RELATIONS; AND C) US-THAI RELATIONS.

2. ALTHOUGH IT APPEARS TO US THAT AIRCRAFT DISPOSITION PROPOSED
REFTEL REPRESENTS DECISIVE STEP IN US-LAO RELATIONS, THAT IS
MATTER TO BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND EMBASSY VIENTIANE.

3. UNDER HEADING OF THAI-LAO RELATIONS, AIRCRAFT HAVE ALREADY
BEEN SUBJECT OF DIPLOMATIC NOTE FROM PGNU TO RTG ASKING THEIR
RETURN. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, THAI HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO THIS
NOTE NOR HAVE LAO FOLLOWED UP ON IT. LAO HAVE, HOWEVER, ASKED
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FOR RETURN OF TWO HELICOPTERS FLOWN TO THAILAND

BY DEFECTING RLAF PERSONNEL (PARA 12 REFTTEL), AND RTG IS
LIKELY TO GO ALONG WITH THIS.

4. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (BANGKOK 17062), RTG IS
WORKING HARD, ALBEIT CALMLY, TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH
LAOS AND TO ALLAY LAOTIAN PARANOIA AS REGARDS THAILAND'S
INTENTIONS. RETURN OF TWO HELICOPTERS, RESTRAINT SHOWN BY
THAI WHEN BORDER INCIDENTS OCCUR, EXPULSION OF RIGHT-WING
LAOTIAN LEADERS FROM THAILAND, REITERATION OF OFFERS
OF ECONOMIC AID, AND CAUTIOUS HANDLING OF MEO REFUGEES ARE
EVIDENCE IN THIS REGARD.

5. GIVEN THIS CONSCIOUS THAI POLICY OF SEEKING TO PLACATE
LAOTIANS, KRIANGSAK'S VIEW (PARA 8 REFTTEL) THAT RLAF ASSETS
AT UDORN ARE A MATTER BETWEEN THE US AND LAOS CANNOT BE
TAKEN AS REPRESENTATIVE OF RTG VIEWS AS A WHOLE. WE THINK
CIVILIAN SIDE OF THAI GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MUCH LESS LIKELY
TO GO ALONG WITH "DISCREET DISPOSITION" OF LAO AIRCRAFT THAN
WAS CASE WITH MAP/MASF ASSETS EX CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM. THAI
ARMED FORCES THEMSELVES, FOR THAT MATTER, ARE PRIMARILY
INTERESTED IN CHOICE LAOTIAN T-28S AND WOULD SEE LITTLE
VIRTUE IN DISPOSITION PROPOSED REFTTEL, WHICH GIVES ALL
T-28S TO PHILIPPINES. ((RTAF WOULD, HOWEVER, PROBABLY GO
ALONG WITH DISPOSITION THAT WOULD GIVE THAILAND ONLY TWO
C-123K AND 14 T-28D WHICH HAVE EJECTION SEAT AND MIGHT
EVEN BE WILLING IN THAT CASE TO TURN IN 14 EXISTING RTAF T-28S
FOR REDISTRIBUTION TO RPL.))

6. BY COMPLICATING THAILAND'S EFFORTS TO MEND FENCES WITH
LAOS, PROPOSED DISPOSITION OF AIRCRAFT WOULD BE SOUR NOTE
IN THAI-US RELATIONS. AT SAME TIME, IT WOULD GIVE
CREDIBILITY TO THOSE ON BOTH SIDES OF THAI-LAO BORDER WHO
ARE CONDUCTING PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE
THAT USG IS FOLLOWING CONSCIOUS POLICY OF SEEKING TO STIR
UP TROUBLE BETWEEN THAILAND AND LAOS.

7. AS WE SEE IT, THESE AIRCRAFT ASSETS ARE NOT MILITARILY
IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY COMPLICATING THAI-LAO AND
US-THAI RELATIONS, AS WE THINK THEY WOULD. WE THEREFORE
PROPOSE FOLLOWING APPROACH, WHICH HAS ADDITIONAL MERIT OF
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FORCING THAI TO SORT OUT FOR THEMSELVES ANY DIFFERENCES OF
OPINION BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SIDES OF THEIR HOUSE
AND BEAR ONUS THEMSELVES FOR EFFECT ON THAI-LAO RELATIONS.

8. WE WOULD OPEN CANDID DISCUSSION OF LAO AIRCRAFT QUESTION
AT TOP LEVEL OF RTG, PROBABLY WITH PRIME MINISTER. (AS
FOLLOW-UP TO OUR EARLIER DISCUSSION WITH KRIANGSAK, WE WOULD
INFORM SUPREME COMMAND OF OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THESE PLANES.)

WE WOULD SAY THAT, WITH IMPENDING CLOSURE OF THAI-AM UDORN, LAO AIRCRAFT MUST BE DISPOSED OF. WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO DO THIS: A) TURN OVER ALL AIRCRAFT TO THAI ARMED FORCES AS MAP-REDISTRIBUTABLE, NO-COST ITEMS; OR B) PERMIT THEM TO BE RECLAIMED BY LAOTIANS. WE WOULD CONCLUDE THAT IN RECOGNITION OF THE RTG'S CONCERN OVER ITS RELATIONS WITH LAOS, WE ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT WHICHEVER OF THESE TWO SOLUTIONS IS DESIRED BY THAI.

9. AS A VARIATION ON SUGGESTION (A) IN PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH, WE COULD STIPULATE THAT IF MAP-REDISTRIBUTABLE SOLUTION IS CHOSEN, WE WOULD EXPECT TO REDISTRIBUTE TO THIRD COUNTRIES ANY ITEMS NOT DESIRED BY THAI ARMED FORCES.

10. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS APPROACH COULD WELL RESULT IN RETURN OF AIRCRAFT TO LAOS. IT SEEMS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THIS WOULD NOT MEASURABLY INCREASE THREAT TO THAILAND, SINCE AIRCRAFT COULD BE EXPECTED TO BECOME INOPERABLE WITHIN SHORT TIME ONCE RETURNED TO LAOS.

11. THAI ARE, OF COURSE, FULLY AWARE THAT THERE IS QUESTION AS TO EXTENT TO WHICH "LAOS" EXISTS AS FREE-AGENT, BUT THEY SEE NO ALTERNATIVE TO TRYING TO DEAL WITH IT AS SEPARATE POLITICAL ENTITY WITH SOME DEGREE OF INDEPENDENT CONTROL OVER ITS OWN POLICY.
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